

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND THE CULTURE OF PEACE IN CENTRAL AFRICA AND THE GREAT LAKES REGION

Libreville, 18-20 November 2003

POETS AND WRITERS' MANIFESTO

Considering the opportuneness and historical significance of the **International Conference on Intercultural Dialogue and the Culture of Peace in Central Africa and the Great Lakes Region** organized in Libreville, Gabon, from 18 to 20 November 2003,

Considering the prominent place which poets and writers from various cultural areas of Africa have been accorded around the theme: “**Literature and peace: writing in a crisis-torn Africa**”,

Considering that it is poets, writers and people of culture who paved the way for African independences during the historical congresses of black writers and artists of 1956 and 1959,

Considering that poets and writers have a substantial role to play in furthering quality education in Africa through the literary content of their works with a view to asserting a strong citizenship, opening up to an enriching cultural diversity, promoting the spirit of peace, upholding human rights and living by the dialogue of cultures,

Considering UNESCO's role and action in the fields of culture and literature,

The poets and writers attending the Libreville Conference welcome the holding and organization of this first international conference on intercultural dialogue and the culture of peace in Central Africa and the Great Lakes Region.

They acknowledge with appreciation the *Writers' Forum* which has demonstrated how central African literature and its creators are to the cultural and political arrangements that Africa needs to participate in helping with preventing and resolving conflicts as well as establishing a qualitative democracy capable of bringing about peace and development.

The poets and writers present in Libreville wish for the setting-up of a 'follow-up Council' of the Conference, two members of which would be creators.

They call on UNESCO and the *Agence Intergouvernementale de la Francophonie* to step up their support to literary production and edition in Southern countries by implementing effective budgetary measures.

They request UNESCO and the *Agence Intergouvernementale de la Francophonie* to make grants and fellowships accessible to creators from the various African cultural areas and, lastly, to shoulder collaboratively the continent's problems and questionings.

The poets and writers participating in the Conference of Libreville call for UNESCO and the *Agence Intergouvernementale de la Francophonie*, with support from other international partners, to set up an "Advisory Council of African poets and writers" for a sustained reflection on conflict prevention and resolution on the continent.

Such Council would submit a report setting out directions for precise actions and recommendations, as well as a plan of action with defined objectives.

They call for a greater presence of their works in African countries' educational systems and programs.

They recommend the implementation and promotion of a genuine reading culture right from primary education in order for African youth to become familiar with books.

They appeal to African political leaders to establish an inclusive democracy through dialogue, tolerance and the integration of all parties and stakeholders with the aim of building States that are strong and respected.

They call upon Africa, chiefly its sons and daughters, for a better investment in the continent's future.

They pay homage to President El Hadj Omar BONGO ONDIMBA and his Government for having accepted to host such a conference in Gabon, which honours them and honours Central Africa.

They more especially thank Mr Makhily GASSAMA - a literary critic and current UNESCO subregional Representative in Libreville - who has been the moving spirit behind this Conference as well as the inspired initiator of the *Writers' Forum*, for his vision, his integrative and dialogue-seeking capacity.

They also thank warmly Mr Isidore NDAYWELL E NZIEM, Director for Languages and written works at the *Agence Intergouvernementale de la Francophonie* for the material, intellectual and moral contribution provided by the *Agence Intergouvernementale de la Francophonie* to make a success of the *Writers' Forum*.

They recommend the implementation of a genuine book policy for making the price of this tool - which is vital to the training of African youth - attractive.

Done at Libreville on 20 November 2003

The Participants
(list in annex)

List of Writers

M. Seydou Badian KOUYATE
M. Cheikh Hamidou KANE
M. Henri LOPES
M. Djibril Tamsir NIANE
M. Amadou Lamine SALL
M. Auguste MOUSSIROU MOUYAMA
M. Boubacar Boris DIOP
M. Jean DIVASSA NYAMA
M. Dominique DOUMA
M. Doumbi – FAKOLY
M. Kadima – NZUJI MUKALA
M. Locha MATEO
Mme Justine MINSTA
M. Maurice OKOUMBA NKOGHE
Mme Yolande MUKAGASANA
M. Junior OTEMBE NGUEMA